



NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Title I Waiver for School Improvement Grants

Establishment of Graduation Rate of Less than 75% for PLAS Identification
February 2010

Nebraska is requesting a waiver under Section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) for one of the criteria used for identifying schools as persistently lowest-achieving schools as defined for the State Fiscal Stabilization Funds (SFSF), the School Improvement Grants under Section 1003(g) of the ESEA, and the Race To The Top Grants and used for the identification of Tier I and Tier II schools in the School Improvement Grants. The definition of persistently lowest-achieving schools in the above guidance includes *“a high school that has a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60% over a number of years”*. Nebraska is requesting to extend this definition to also include high schools that have a graduation rate of less than 75% over a number of years.

Although Nebraska will have graduation rates as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) as required by 2010-11, that data is not available now when the persistently lowest-achieving schools must be identified for the applications for the above listed grants. The only graduation rate data available now at the building level uses a variation of the NCES formula that was approved to use for AYP calculations. That formula adds English Language Learners who complete with a regular diploma in 5 years, and students with disabilities who complete in high school with a regular diploma in their 5th, 6th or 7th year. This AYP formula produces higher graduation rates than the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate of 34 CFR 200.19(b) will in 2010-11.

By including the high schools that have a graduation rate of less than 75% over a period of time in the definition of persistently lowest-achieving schools, Nebraska anticipates being able to provide Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grants to high schools that will, most likely, become eligible for SIG funds under the cohort graduation rate defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) but are not eligible now when the funds are available.

Nebraska assures that any high school made eligible under this waiver that receives an ESEA Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grant will be held to all rules and requirements of that grant.

The application process requires public notice and an opportunity for members of the public to comment. The USDE Guidance on School Improvement Grants and the ARRA School Improvement Grant Application can be found at the following link: http://www.nde.state.ne.us/ARRA/School_Improvement_Grants.html

Comments are encouraged and should be submitted via email to Randy.McIntyre@nebraska.gov by 5:00 p.m. (Central) on March 4, 2010.